DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 153 210 CS 204 012

AUTHOR Silver, Sheila J.
TITLE Covering Women: Women's Publications and the Mass Media.
PUB DATE Aug 77
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (60th, Madison, Wisconsin, August 21-24, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Females; *Feminism; Journalism; *Mass Media; News Media; *News Reporting; News Writing; *Periodicals; *Publications; Surveys

ABSTRACT

Before reporting on a study of the relationship between the mass media and advocates of women's rights who edit periodicals for women, the first half of this paper discusses the following: the problematic area of the coverage of women in newspapers, feminist criticism of the restricted content of women's pages, the press's controversial coverage of the women's movement, journalists as advocates of feminism, and feminist periodicals. The second half of the paper reports on a questionnaire designed to find out how 210 editors of women's publications felt about communication for women. Questions asked for specific information about the publication and limited the range of responses on opinion questions. The survey results are both demographic and related to the relationship between the mass media and the respondents. The study revealed no hostility between feminist editors and the press; dissatisfaction that exists on the part of the editors surveyed lies mainly in the frustrations of reaching women when limited by unsophisticated equipment, low budgets, and small staffs, while the mass media, with wider influence and range, are uncertain and inconsistent in assigning stories about women and giving them prominent play. (CC)

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COVERING WOMEN: WOMEN'S PUBLICATIONS AND THE MASS MEDIA

Qualitative Studies Division

Association for Education in Journalism

60th Annual Convention

August, 1977

Sheila J. Silver

College of Journalism
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland

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Journalists and social scientists are still writing epitaphs for the Sixties, the decade in which the nation discovered many different voices in the chorus calling for recognition. Among the most strident of the voices were those of the sopranos and altos, the women who started what came to be known as "women's lib." Beginning about 1968, the female chorus let it be known that in addition to harmonizing with the tenors and basses, they'd like to select the music and direct the singing. The women's movement had been born -- again.

In 1963 a free-lance writer who contributed frequently to women's magazines, Betty Friedan, wrote The Feminine Mystique, a book which stirred up a great deal of controversy about what fulfills American women. The happy homemaker/loving wife/imaginative mother triad of roles was not what it was cracked up to be, Friedan said, and the sooner men and women recognized that, the better off everyone would be. The mass media, particularly women's magazines, were partially to blame for reinforcing stereotypes about women's roles, she said.

Three years later, Friedan and 31 other women founded the National Organization for Women. Many other women's groups had been formed around the nation, many of which coalesced with NOW. Other more radical groups and collectives formed to support the interests of lesbians or women in a particular region or occupation. And in March 1968, the first women's liberation newsletter, Voice of women's liberation, was published. Voice went from three mimeographed pages to four pages offset by its second issue, and served as the main vehicle of communication for the fledgling "women's movement."[1] "Women's lib" was now in the journalism business -- and that is where the interface with this research project begins.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between advocates of women's rights who edit periodicals for women and the mass media for whom the women's movement was a news event. What did they think of the mass media's performance in treating stories of interest to women? Why were women's liberation groups hostile to the establishment media? Why did feminists set up alternative media? Do female reporters from radio, television and print media seem to give fairer coverage than males do? Do these reporters contact editors of alternative women's publications for assistance in developing stories? How do these editors view their publications in relation to the mass media?

A "socially responsible" press, the kind we like to think we enjoy in this country, is expected to uncover news made not only by the powerful, but to move as well news about the powerless, or those struggling for a share of influence. If there is dissatisfaction with the press's performance in relaying news about a dissident group or a new point of view, a flurry of letters to the editor may result. In broadcasting, an unhappy viewer or group can invoke the Fairness Doctrine in hopes that the licensee will amplify the viewer's standpoint. Or the person or group who feels their condition is being ignored by mass media can -- if they can afford it -- begin a new publication.

It should be pointed out early in this paper that although a number of "alternative" publications were begun out of a dissatisfaction with the performance of the mass media, not all were. Specialized publications are more appropriate for sharing information about research, organizational activities, the arts, etc. Their editors know that, realistically, the mass media cannot often make room for items that appeal only to a small share of their readership or market.

But the viewpoints of editors who steer "alternative" publications or periodicals with a message for women can be helpful because their editorial products are directed towards an audience who usually cannot find comparable material in any of the media routinely available to them. These editors' opinions about the sensitivity of mass media to women's issues can suggest areas of

strength and weakness in the media's handling of news about women.

Women's News

"Newsworthiness" is judged on an amorphous standard that varies with the size and type of community. Not everyone agrees on what makes a woman newsworthy. Not all women do, and certainly all editors of newspapers don't.

There's another side of the question too. What's "news" to women? Recipes? Fashions? Politics? Equal pay for equal work?

Gena Corea, a former women's page editor, criticized the coverage newspapers give to women. She cited a 1973 study which showed that editors consider women to be newsmakers if they meet one of these criteria: an important husband, beauty, victimization, political significance, performance in the arts or athletics, ability as a homemaker, and "first woman" status, i.e., first female Little League shortstop. And not many women meet even these criteria, Corea said.[2]

Yet, even if a woman is a bona fide newsmaker in her own right, many reporters and editors insist on locking her into the domestic attributes of her life. How many times, Corea asked, have you read of a local candidate for public office, described as a "petite housewife" and a "mother of three," who was asked how her husband felt about her seeking election?[3]

Susan H. Miller found that news photos are still shot and cropped to conform to traditional ideas about women's and men's roles. In a study of the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times, half of the women in photos were shown as spouses, socialites or entertainers, but less than a fourth of the shots depicted men in these roles. About 75 percent of the men's photos showed them as politicians, professionals, or sports figures — less than 25 percent showed women in these roles. Photos of brides accounted for almost one-quarter of the total photos of women in the Post.[4]

Neither paper carried "cheesecake" photos, Miller said (although Cores observed that United Press International has a photographer wandering around Australia taking pictures of women "as nearly nude as possible!")[5] However, Miller found that the Times did have a penchant for running photos of beauty queens, 12 in 46 issues of the paper, for an average of more than one in every four days.[6]

In 1972 female employees at the Washington Post complained to the paper's management that "Many stories considered expendable deal with the social issues of interest to the general reader but they are given short shrift in this male-oriented, politically-attuned newspaper. The issues of women's rights, health, consumer news, day care, abortion and welfare are examples of stories not being adequately covered or displayed; and a newspaper with so few women cannot adequately reflect the interests and concerns of our complex and fragmented society."[7]

Women's Pages

Typically crowded with articles on fashion, food and family, women's pages became easy targets for feminist criticism. Some woman's sections have since been revamped as "lifestyle" sections, focusing on both men and women, entertainment, and leisure. But if readers and reporters thought this redesigning would free more of the newshole for profiles and investigative pieces about people in the community, women as well as men, they were disappointed. Zena Beth Guenin McGlashen found that entertainment material had replaced traditional content,[8] and Susan Miller discovered that "lifestyle" sections still tend to look like women's pages because they retain the traditional slick ornamentation of women's photos and fashion and cosmetic ads.[9]

Writer Lindsy Van Gelder said that the lifestyle section for which she worked was "a dumping ground for anything the male editors consider a 'woman's story'. So we get all the serious news stories about ERA, rape-law changes, back-pay lawsuits, and so forth, back among the girdle ads instead of on page one or two or three where they belong."[10]

And at the same time, the meaty "blockbuster" stories developed by women's page reporters often are "stolen" for play in other sections of the paper, depriving the woman's pages of an attention-getter.

Covering the Women's Movement

"If I believed what I read about the women's movement in the press, I'd have nothing to do with it. If I believed what I read about myself in the press, I'd have little to do with me."

That's what Gloria Steinem, editor and writer for Ms. magazine and a founder of the National Women's Political Caucus, told the 1973 convention of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. Steinem said women don't want sympathy in their battle for equal rights, but they do expect to be taken seriously and reported accurately.[11]

In his article, "What Men Think About the Movement," Robert T. Tuten said that "It became very clear in the late '60's that if risque' women made good copy, angry women made even better copy."[12] In adopting some of the tactics of war resisters in the 1960's - guerrilla theater, demonstrations, picketing - women's liberationists attracted a good bit of curiosity and ridicule. At the 1968 "Miss America Contest," some feminist protesters wanted to burn a bra, draft-card style. They never did, but the media picked up on their plans, and women's liberationists have been dubbed "bra-burners" ever since. It can be argued that titillation was the very thing that caused the protest in the first place, and the news media only reflected that. Still, Steinem said, every time she tries to explain that feminists aren't underwear-burners, her explanation gets more play in the media than other points she tries to make.[13] Explaining away the movement's bad reputation takes time from discussion of other issues, she felt.

Women's rights advocates have complained that the media — underground periodicals as well as the establishment press — have oversimplified their goals, locked them into stereotypes as hysterical women or sex-starved harpies, or worse,

sexual deviants (working an endorsement of support for lesbian rights into the NOW convention platform several years ago split the membership, many of whom were fearful of how the media would explain the move to their audiences.) They have accused the media of dwelling on the way feminists have expressed their anger and frustration, rather than probing to find out what caused it in the first place. They are unhappy with the way the media covered abortion debate (women's rightists vs. right-to-life groups) and the Equal Rights Amendment (NOW vs. anti-ERA groups).

Tuten criticized the failure of television to recognize the way NOT to present information about the women's movement:

> If the war, some 12,000 miles away was too hot to handle, the women's movement right here at home was a whole magnitude worse. The television news media method for handling the problem has been to only publicize marches, demonstrations, and political speeches. Only on an occasional talk show has the basic claim of women's liberation come up for airing... Generally the interlocuters have attempted to see and portray the movement as another minority group seeking its day in the sun. With the quasi-liberal paternalism characteristic of network broadcasting, the movement is given its due.[14]

Miller found that coverage of the women's movement was limited in news photos, too:

> In the 46 days sampled, the Washington Post carried more than twice as many photos of male activists as female activists. The Los Angeles Times published equal numbers of photos of male and female activists. However, less than 15 percent of all photos of women activists showed advocates of women's rights.... Coverage of women's sports activism, or professional activities is negligible, and falls far behind coverage of similar activities for men... The portrayal of women's roles in the Post and the Times does not reflect the roles women occupy in the District of Columbia or Los Angeles communities, nor does it reflect the impact of changes in women's roles on economics and social factors.[15]

In many ways, the movement itself has confounded coverage of women's issues by its hostility towards members of the establishment press, print and broadcast alike. The movement's desire NOT to be misrepresented, quoted out of context, or condensed to fit a newshole or second-limit, as well as a wide-spread fear that media use them for their own purposes rather than to inform others about the movement, has created a paranoia about contact with the media, which in turn, caused

movement women to censor information they share with reporters and correspondents. Even reporters who are known to be sympathetic to the women's liberation movement — men and women alike — have an uneven track record when it comes to getting members of the movement to talk to them.

KNOW, inc., a feminist press in Pittsburgh, Pa., distributed a list of "Reporters You Can Trust." Forty-three journalists appear on it, including four men. According to the preface, "every writer on this list has written and gotten published a news story or feature article that showed no evidence of sexism." The tendency to sensationalize and hence distort the news of the movement isn't universal, the preface said.[16]

What is interesting about the list is not the names of the individuals who appear on it, but the pointed reference to those who don't:

> The pseudo-story of the 'burned bras' and other tasteless, if not downright deliberate, mis-representations of women's liberation movement, have made feminists very wary of the members of the fourth estate. Some refuse to be interviewed at all, others will not talk to male reporters, experience having taught that men's biases against sexual equality are stronger and show more. Women reporters, even those who express initial reservations, have repeatedly wound up by joining us.[17]

In 1970, East Coast leaders of the women's liberation movement decided to get tougher with the press. Sandie North, in "Reporting the Movement," said that movement women, "restive after what they feel has been a press blackout on their activities until, roughly, the fall of 1969, feel no compunction about stomping on the mass media and the men who control it."[18]

Said North:

> They're fed up with ridicule from male reporters and editors who sneer at the feminists at public gatherings. They've said that letting any representative of the male establishment — man or woman — in to report on their meetings' is as smart as it would be for black power men to invite Lester Maddox to their caucus'.[19]

A woman reporter for Time told North she was cut off by a woman's liberation group after she attended one meeting. A Newsweek editor contacted dozens of feminists in October 1969 before she could find one who was willing to talk for print. Television networks all want film documentaries for news shows, but have met with dug-in resistance from militant feminists. Younger and more radical women refused to be filmed, even if the reporter and producer were females sympathetic to the subjects they wanted to film.

The Reporter as Advocate

"The liberation story is trouble for a women reporter from start to finish," said Marlene Sanders, vice president for television documentaries, ABC. She tried to film the Feminist Repertory Theater show at the Congress to United Women in New York in late 1969. She met with feminists who refused to be filmed, insisted that film not be used after it was shot, and who took ABC/s trunk of lights and film canisters to foil Sanders' project. "Here I am, in real agreement with the Women's Liberation Front, and they're oppressing me."[20]

Nora Ephron described the strain placed on women journalists who cover women's rights activities and who are in sympathy with the movement. "I am a writer and I am a feminist," she wrote in her book, Crazy Salad, "and the two seem to be constantly in conflict." She described her own feelings of sympathy with the National Womens' Political Caucus at the 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami, and recalled that "There were women reporters so passionately involved in the (abortion) issue that they were lobbying the delegates."[21]

American journalism has been touched by advocacy many times, but as North says, men and women reporters and writers "are steeped in a tradition of fairness."[22] The hiring of ombudsmen on papers and in news organizations adds another monitor of fairness toward which journalists feel they must strive. But the '60's shook the code of objectivity under which journalists tried to perform:

> In the 1960's, the gatekeeper model of journalistic professionalism was questioned by some leading journalists... Some proclaimed that objectivity in reporting was impossible, or at least doubtful, and that the task of the journalist was to represent the viewpoints and interest of competing groups, especially those of excluded and underprivileged groups... Therefore the role of the journalist is to insure that all perspectives are adequately represented in the media, for the resolution of social conflict depends on effective representation of alternative definitions of reality. The journalist must "participate" in the advocacy process.[23]

John Johnstone found that 34.9 percent of the 1,300 journalists he polled in 1971 thought there were too few crusaders in the media. But only 11 percent were willing to endorse the activities of the underground press without qualification.[24]

The advocacy role is an uncomfortable one for most journalists. "The journalist in the main works for organizations with heterogeneous audiences," Janowitz says. "These audiences respond with sharp criticism to content which distorts that part of the environment with which they are directly familiar; and persistent distortion runs the risk of loss of specific audience segments."[25]

Feminist periodicals

The feminist presses, on the other hand, wear the mantle of advocacy easily. Rather than shunning it, advocacy of women's "liberation" and women's rights was the raison d'etre of the several hundred publications edited for women.

Many of the periodicals published for women do not assume a radical feminist committment on the part of their readers. They seek to communicate with women in terms of law, health, employment, or regional interests. Many are not the least bit militant. They simply are specialized publications geared to a small audience that shares a common interest, be it cultural, occupational, or informational.

The feminist press has not been written about very widely. It is a variegated brand of journalism, covering many different topics from many different perspectives. Many of the publications cannot be said to be "objective" in nature -- they are most often described as "literature of the movement" rather than "journalism":

> Our press falls squarely (circularly?) into the realm of advocacy journalism. One of the chief characteristics of feminist journalism is that we do have an ax to grind. Feminist journalism does attempt to deflect the ax of oppression that has for thousands of years ground out the existence of women in world history. Men, and especially women, who deny that our press is biased, who strive for the mythical objectivity of the New York Times, deny feminist journalism's very reason for existence.[26]

Alexa Freeman and Valle Jones urge feminists to look beyond "male-created mass media" and create their own forms of and designs of feminist communication. They also suggest that feminists discard the notion that the media are objective:

> Even the most honest attempt to present factural information cannot encompass the full variety of possible perspectives. At best, it can only attempt to achieve representation of a broad range of views. (Moreover, we should ask whether objectivity is necessarily a goal to which feminist communication should aspire).[27]

Some writers feel that feminist communication burgeoned in reaction to unfair, even malicious, treatment by the establishment press, and that advocacy journalism practiced by feminist writers and editors is a logical reaction to the treatment of the women's movement by the mass media:

> The recognition that communication is essential to building and strengthening a movement, the realization that the mass media is not only inaccessible to feminists but actually uses its power to distort and discredit the image of feminism, and the belief that feminists needed their own means of communicating led to the birth of the feminist publications that have been vital elements in the politicization of thousands of women.[28]

Donna Allen, director of the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press, Washington, D.C., feels that feminist editors (and editors in all media) can best tell their story by adhering to the three principles she follows in publishing Media Report to Women: no attacks on people, letting people speak for themselves, and emphasis on fact over opinoin.[29]

Jo Freeman, author of The Politics of Women's Liberation and founder of the first women's newsletter, Voice of women's liberation, notes that the multitude

of feminist publications grew partly out of fear, because of many woman's inexperience with the press. Women also felt they needed their own press because the establishment media had inaccurately reported social movements and student protests of which early feminists had been a part.[30]

"Most of the media compounded this problem." Freeman said, "by treating early women's liberation activities with a mixture of humor, ridicule, and disbelief."[31]

Anne Mather suggests that "The decision of women's magazines -- as well as other publications of the 1960's -- to ignore the growing 20th century 'woman question' (in spite of the fact that many were having problems reaching the lucrative, younger woman market) -- was clear enticement for others to launch an alternate, feminist press."[32]

Both Freeman and Mather note that the underground papers of the '60's, rather than offering support to feminists, ran chauvinistic material side-by-side with feminist articles. "Underground and New Left papers were often the worst of the lot," Freeman said, "frequently running women's liberation stories illustrated by naked women and exaggerated genitalis."[33]

But the problem of getting the mass media agenda to cover feminist activity still remained. Nancy Cooper has pointed out that "Feminist periodicals, like an assortment of other specialized media, can supplement and enrich, but certainly not replace, the general mass media... Feminist periodicals are a way of filling the information gap because, at least for the present, feminists are a minority group."[34]

Polling Editors of Publications for Women

To find out how editors of these periodicals felt about communication for women, a questionnaire was mailed to 210 editors of women's publications. The mailing list was developed from the "periodicals" section of "Women's Media Groups" in the 1976 Index to Media Report to Women,[35] and from the list of "Movement Periodicals" in Womanhood: Media.[36]

The questionnaires were mailed with a cover letter and a postage-paid return envelope.

Expectations about the return rate were optimistic but tempered by the hunch that many of the publications might have folded and that their editors simply might not respond. A number of the publications on both lists were associated with university groups or women's centers, organizations which frequently run into staffing and funding problems that force them to close up shop. Mail might still be delivered to such a group, even if it no longer is active, but it's not likely that the questionnaire would be returned.

In writing the questionnaire, care was taken to avoid the "tell-me-everything-you-know-about" design that Robert L. Hoskins cautions against.[37] Questions asked for specific information about the publication and limited the range of responses on opinion questions. Only one open-ended question was asked. Neither the cover letter nor the questionnaire asked for supplementary information or a copy of the publication.

The mail survey generated about 93 responses out of the mailing list of 210. Twelve were returned, undeliverable; four were returned with notes -- sometimes lengthy -- from editors who explained the publication was defunct; one sent literature about the publication but did not fill out the questionnaire. Altogether, 76 questionnaires were tabulated.

Results

As might be expected, none of the respondents is engaged in daily, or even weekly, journalism or publishing. The greatest number published monthly (30.3%) or quarterly (31.6%).

Most edit newsletters (34.2%). Magazines and journals represent 25% of the respondents, journals 19.7%, followed by newspapers with 15.8%. Direct similarity with mass media products is thus quite limited in the feminist press, even if the magazine and newspaper figures are considered together.

None of the editors works for "old" publications. Barely one-sixth of the publications were founded before the women's movement gained media attention around 1968. The remainder have been founded since then, with more than half (56.7%) founded since 1972.

Better than a third (35.5%) of the editors claim readership greater than 5,000 for their publications. Twenty-nine percent of the publications fall into the modest 1,000 to 3,000 range.

Some of the high-circulation periodicals are married to their membership, which boosts subscription rates, such as National Business Women (170,000); or the AAUW Journal (190,000), although more and more the Journal has addressed itself to women's issues on a general basis rather than simply functioning as a house organ. Others simply are growing, such as Progressive Woman with 24,273 monthly readers; Playgirl, with more than a million; and Chatelaine in Canada, which reports 1.28 million paid subscribers.

Pinning down the "editorial profile" of the respondents was hard. There are inherent problems in grouping publications under any rubric, and trying to squeeze 210 periodicals into the category of "special interest periodicals for women" was no exception. Respondents often filled in more than one response for the question that asked about editorial emphasis. But their determination to be accurate actually made the question more sensitive rather than less. The multiple responses and the inflated "other" category revealed a wealth of information.

The computer was programmed to tabulate multiple responses to this question, so percentages add up to more than 100%. Scholarly material was carried by only 17.1%. Less than 14% were literary publications. More than 35% were news-oriented (i.e., they covered breaking news about women), and 36% carried organizational information (news-oriented and organizational information constituted the most frequent combinations of multiple response answers). Forty-four percent described themselves as "other" -- usually after describing themselves as

another one of the above. The "other" entries included political analysis, essays on arts, culture; consciousness-raising and coping; alternative lifestyles; nuts-and-bolts information about careers; sexual preference; history; and communications.

Eighty-six percent of the periodicals had all-female staffs. Almost 11% had both male and female (though more female) staffers, but only one publication reported having a "near-even" balance of the sexes on the staff.

After collecting the "demographics" of each periodical, the questionnaire turned to the relationship between the mass media and the respondents. Almost 40% said they felt the media had a very positive image of their periodicals. They said they thought journalists considered it "a valuable communication tool in its own right." Another 28% said they thought journalists perceived their periodicals as informative but probably biased. Slightly more than five percent responded "yes" when asked if the media probably thought their periodical was "a catch-all for women's lib rhetoric." Twenty-eight percent of the respondents declined to answer the question, said it wasn't applicable, or added other perceptions such as "Journalists consider us a curiosity," or "They're hardly aware of us," or "No opinion."

Only 5.3% of the respondents edit strictly local publications. Eight percent say their publications have a regional circulation. Forty-two percent say their readership is national, while an equal percentage say their readership is international.

Of those who answered the question (21 editors did not), about 70 percent who say they edit for "a radical feminist" reader, or "a reader with a well-defined interest in feminism but without a radical commitment" indicate that the media perceive their periodicals positively ("valuable tool") or with mild if not overwhelming favor ("informative though probably biased"). Almost half the editors said they were writing for readers who perceived themselves as non-radical feminists. Only one of the 10% of the respondents who edit "radical

feminist" publications believes the mass media write her publication off simply as "a catch-all for 'women's lib' rhetoric."

More than half the editors said journalists have called them for help on stories they were working on. Two thirds of the editors who say the media look upon their publications favorably report that reporters call on them "often" or at least "sometimes" for help.

Almost half said journalists had used their publications for story ideas. Journalists seemed to depend more on those periodicals described by their editors as "news-oriented" for story ideas than any other type. Sixty-three percent of editors of news-type periodicals said reporters have used their publication for story ideas. Reporters used other types of publication (scholarly, literary, organizational) to develop their ideas too, the editors indicated, but not nearly as often as the news-oriented ones.

All but four editors who responded thought the mass media were writing more frequently about women's issues, with 30% noticing "a great deal more" coverage since 1970. All the editors who perceived that the media thought favorably of their publications indicated that journalists were writing about women's issues "a great deal more frequently."

Respondents who thought the media were writing more frequently about women's issues also thought the media were writing more sensitively than at the beginning of the decade. Only 5.2% said the mass media were dealing with women's issues less sensitively than in 1970. One respondent said that journalists were writing more often and more sensitively in places like Washington and New York City, but that sensitivity to the issues had only improved somewhat in the rest of the country, and frequency of articles on women's issues hadn't improved much at all. One editor detected a great deal more sensitivity in articles "when they write -- the total amount isn't all that much increased," she said. And another said journalists are writing about women's issues "somewhat more, but with less sensitivity."

The question that drew the most "extra" responses (followup comments scrawled in the margins of the questionnaire) asked editors if they thought the sex of journalists makes a difference in the way they cover women's issues. Three-quarters of those who answered this question said they felt female reporters were more sympathetic and helpful in covering and transmitting news about women's issues. The remainder said there was no significant difference in the performance of a male reporter or a female reporter on this type of assignment. Ten editors declined to answer. None identified males as providing better coverage of women's issues.

One editor said females are "more objective, have a more realistic perception of events." One said women are "more sensitive," while another said she thought "males were facetious or hostile more often." One said she's noted no significant difference between men and women reporters, except for "feminist reporters, thankfully growing in number." One woman who thought females tended to be more helpful and sympathetic in reporting women's news also pointed out that "even women tend to be sexist." And another said females are better at reporting women's issues "but the bad ones are really hostile!"

Conclusions

One question asked editors to explain why they started their publications. The question was left open-ended in order to record each of the many reasons expected to be offered.

The reasons were varied. Some simply wanted to improve communication within a women's center or an organization of professional women. Some wanted to support a forum for purely feminist thought and analysis, including politics, music, art, and women's studies. Many wanted to use a publication to solidify a sense of "community" among women with specialized interests, i.e., federally employed women, lesbians, collegiate women, women trying to re-enter or enter the marketplace for the first time, women in communication, scholars, businesswomen, writers, laywomen in churches, women seeking information about law and health. Better than

one-third of them referred specifically to filling some kind of information gap by supplying information not readily available through day-to-day channels. That the mass media leaves gaping holes and distortions in its coverage of women's issues is not merely implied by these respondents -- it is asserted.

The range of interests embodied by these periodicals ought to create a challenge for the mass media. These publications have developed at the same time as daily newspapers have been shutting down and as weeklies have grown. All-news radio has grown. Much news and information is being funneled through smaller publications with more concentrated audiences, or through broadcast programs with different formats. Perhaps the major media ought to take a closer look at what is going into these specialized periodicals, and compare it with what is or isn't going into the local newspaper, magazine or public affairs program.

Almost all the editors in this survey see improvement in the frequency and sensitivity of articles on what has come to be known as "the emerging woman." They do not carp about reporters they've dealt with, although the majority feel women journalists do a better job reporting women's issues. Many say their publications exist "to give the real picture of women," "to give women ideas about how to gain recognition for their efforts," "to give women an opportunity to give their points of view," "to communicate about progress in women's equality made in this area," "to fill a void in news coverage on affirmative action," etc. In short, the goals of these publications is to make women visible to other women and to show women how social forces affect them and how they can and do affect those forces themselves.

The survey shows that there is contact between these periodicals and the mass media. The media are in touch, are calling for information and assistance, and are writing about feminists and women's issues more, say these editors. The survey does not denote a rift or hostility between feminist editors and the press. If there is dissatisfaction on the part of the editors surveyed, it seems to lie mainly in the frustrations of reaching women when limited by unsophisticated equip-

ment, low budget, and small staff, at the same time that the mass media, with much wider influence and range, are uncertain and inconsistent in assigning stories about women and giving them prominent play.

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Women's Studies Newsletter
Matrix (WICI)
Women Writing Newsletter
The Women's Newsletter
Lesbian Voices
Primavera
Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society
The Monthly Abstract
The Women's Patrol Sporadic
Northern Women Regional Journal
Long Time Coming
The Feminist Art Journal
Women's Rights Now Reporter
Comment
Feminary
Frontiers: a journal of women studies
Women in Struggle
Sister
Breakthrough
Houston Breakthrough
News and Views (AWRT)
The Other Women
Chatelaine magazine
Feminist Alliance Against Rape Newsletter
Feminine focus
Albatross
Media Report to Women
Few's News and Views
KNOW News
Women's Political Times
WEAL National Newsletter
Quest: A Feminist Quarterly
WomanSpirit
National Business Woman
Sibyl-Child, a woman's arts and culture journal
Gold Flower

* defunct

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The Puce Mongoose
AAUW Journal
Women Today
On Campus with Women
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Canadian Newsletter of Research on Women
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Concerns
Feminist Studies, Inc.
13th Moon
Black Belt Woman
Moving Out
New Directions for Women in Delaware
Earth's Daughters
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The Executive Woman
Press Woman
Women Artists New-letter
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University of Michigan Papers in Women's Studies
Lilith magazine
Branching Out
The Second Wave
New Directions for Women in New Jersey
Notes from the Third Year*
off our backs
Pandora, a Washington women's news journal

<u>Defunct and Did not complete questionnaire</u>

Women's Image
Mainely Now
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